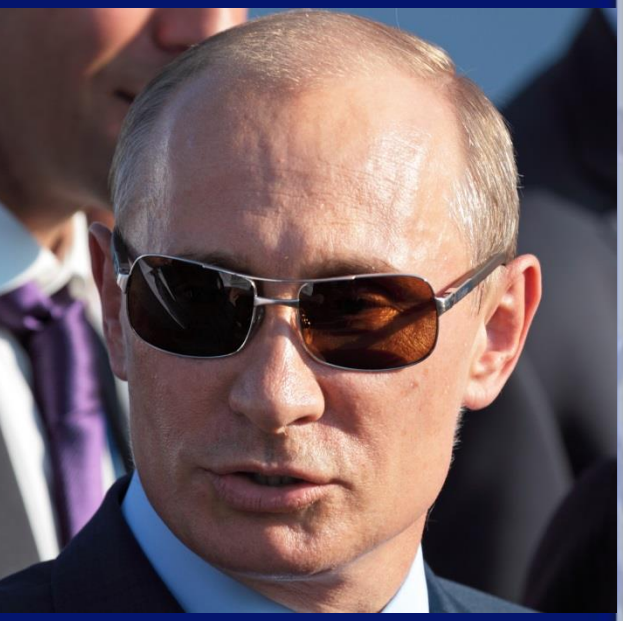

Maskirovka 2.0: Hybrid Threat, Hybrid Response

by

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On the cover: Photo of Russian President Vladimir Putin used by permission of Shutterstock.

Maskirovka 2.0: Hybrid Threat, Hybrid Response

The purpose of this paper is to describe the irregular and hybrid tools and techniques that Russian President Vladimir Putin and his security and intelligence forces have used, first in the attack against Georgia in 2008, then in the assault on Ukraine, and now in Syria, to advance renewed Russian regional hegemony and strategic reach. The paper also describes the mobilization of Russian minority populations, the co-option of the Georgian and Ukrainian regimes, and the West's seeming inability to effectively counter these Russian moves.

In response to the European moves, the paper will describe some joint, interagency, international, and multilateral options the West should consider implementing to combat this threat, and finally, it advocates that the U.S., North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the European Union (EU) employ these and other options to roll back Russian adventurism and reinvigorate the vision of a "Europe Whole and Free." Since the paper was in its near final form when Russia moved into Syria, the assessment of Russia's Syrian adventure is still very speculative at this time. Nevertheless, many aspects of the Syrian case are fully congruent with Russia's hybrid approach in Georgia and Ukraine.

Old Tools, New Wars

The concepts and techniques that the Russians are employing are, for the great majority, not new—and certainly not new to them. The way they are being employed is deeply rooted in old school Soviet military doctrine. I am using the word Maskirovka as an umbrella term to describe the focused application of a series of tactics and procedures that the Red Army held as core doctrinal principles.

These included the overarching concept that friendly military actions should always be concealed from the enemy for as long as possible, and that a commander's intent should always be masked to improve chances of tactical and operational level surprise, to keep the enemy off balance, and to create opportunities for military breakthroughs as a result of the hoped-for chaos in the enemy ranks and leadership. Skillful Maskirovka helped the Soviets achieve strategic surprise on a number of occasions during World War II.

The family of capabilities that composed traditional Maskirovka included camouflage, deception, denial, subversion, sabotage, espionage, propaganda, and psychological operations. Maskirovka 2.0 is a continuation of the old military approach, to which we must add new whole-of-government tools, such as: coercion, media manipulation, the employment of fossil fuel energy access and price as a weapon, cyber-attacks, political agitation, use of agents provocateurs, the deployment of military forces in clandestine status, and the development of surrogate forces by providing arms, equipment, training, intelligence, logistic support, and command and control. Additionally, Maskirovka 2.0 relies on secret diplomacy and extensive low visibility and/or clandestine preparation of the political, military, economic, and informational landscapes. These preparatory actions seem to have set the stage for Syria. The

blending of these old and new capabilities provides Russia a sophisticated hybrid warfare capability which she is using to reestablish her empire.

The original Red Army doctrine was intended for employment on conventional battlefields. The purpose of Maskirovka 2.0 is a bit different in that it is being used to achieve peacetime illegal political and geographic gains while staying below the threshold that would trigger any direct military response from the West. The Russian and surrogate forces can however, absorb and blunt the military counter moves conducted by the states under assault, as these tend to be late and disorganized. In the Ukraine instance, Russian surrogate forces are backed up by large conventional forces poised just across the border on the Russian side, designed to threaten escalation, intimidate the local forces into folding, and create political uncertainty in the corridors of European capitals and at NATO headquarters. In the Georgia case, Maskirovka 2.0 prepared the battle, but Russia used conventional military forces in the assault phase.

New Maskirovka is designed to permit Russia to reestablish (by force when necessary) its sphere of influence in the near abroad.

Old Maskirovka was intended to protect the Soviet Union on the battlefield and to ensure military success. New Maskirovka is designed to permit Russia to reestablish (by force when necessary) its sphere of influence in the near abroad. So far, Putin has been content to focus on Georgia and Ukraine—two nations caught in the "never never land" between the West and Moscow. Each of these has aspirations to join Western structures, including the European Union and NATO. In fact, it was largely at U.S. insistence that they were offered NATO membership in the early 2000s. But by tradition and geography they are core states in the near abroad.

A core consideration in the application of Maskirovka 2.0 by Putin is the design of a multifaceted low-visibility, clandestine, and non-attributable campaign to push his agenda and achieve his security goals while staying well below the threshold of a robust conventional military response by the West. The idea is to leverage the asymmetrical approach to create confusion and hesitancy among your enemies, while you continue to negotiate and then cheat, to appear to be retreating while advancing, and to use threats and coercion to gain the upper hand. All of this is reinforced with a robust, loud, and nasty informational campaign that distorts the truth to the point of disbelief.

The strategic objectives of the campaigns in the near abroad are to "reset" Russia's relationship with NATO, the EU, and the United States. Putin wants to reestablish at least some of the historical Russian influence in the zone and roll back Western influence and policies to the extent possible. His objectives in the Middle East may be more expansive, designed perhaps to reestablish Russia as a regional power and a reliable security partner, and for Russia to serve as a counter balance to U.S. influence in the region.

Ukraine: Threat and Response

By taking incremental steps over months and years in Ukraine, Putin is successfully rolling back the West's oft repeated dream from the late 1990s and the early years of this millennium—our vision of "A Europe Whole and Free." One of the first to use this vision was President George H. W. Bush in Mainz, Germany, in May of 1989. On that occasion he said:

> Of course, leadership has a constant companion: responsibility. And our responsibility is to look ahead and grasp the promise of the future. I said recently that we are at the end of one era and at the beginning of another. And I noted that in regard to the Soviet Union, our policy is to move beyond containment. For 40 years the seeds of democracy in Eastern Europe lay dormant, buried under the frozen tundra of the Cold War. And for 40 years the world has waited for the Cold War to end. And decade after decade, time after time, the flowering human spirit withered from the chill of conflict and oppression; and again the world waited. But the passion for freedom cannot be denied forever. The world has waited long enough. The time is right. Let Europe be whole and free.[1]

Although this phrase remains in vogue, Putin's actions are designed to make the words ring hollow. This trend will continue until the West can design and implement a campaign to combat Russian encroachment, criminalize individual actions, and unmask them for the court of world opinion to condemn. The dream has not died in the eyes of many Georgians and Ukrainians. And it is certainly alive in the hearts of all the "New Europe" members of NATO and the EU who have joined since the demise of the Warsaw Pact. But the West's unwillingness, or inability, to act is certainly undermining the dream's credulity, and perhaps hastening its demise.

Are we watching the wrong game?

Our lack of focus on Europe seems all the more amazing when we take into account our fixation with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the instability in Iraq and Syria. If threat is the combination of an enemy's intent and his capability (a fairly agreed upon description for intelligence officers), then we should be clear eyed about both scenarios.

In Al Raqaa, ISIS Caliph Abu Bakar Al Baghdadi has made his intent crystal clear for the entire world to see. In a few short months, his brutality has made him a world figure. But his capabilities are actually fairly minimal—perhaps four brigades of quasi conventional combat power and 15,000-20,000 dedicated fighters, 5,000 of whom are Western foreigners. His force does not represent a significant military threat to the United States or the West, although Western citizen foreign fighters will likely execute some terrorist attacks upon their return. Nevertheless,

[1] George H. W. Bush, *A Europe Whole and Free* (Washington DC: Department of State, 1989).

Al Baghdadi regularly repeats his call to bring the jihad to Rome. By Rome he means the West—Europe and the United States.

In Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin has done an admirable job of masking his intentions. But they are there to be discerned by any who wish to dig for them. However, his capabilities are second only to those of the United States. He can field a dozen combat-equipped divisions, a substantial air force, a navy including nuclear submarines, and still maintains a nuclear arsenal capable of frying both the United States and Europe in a matter of minutes after launch.

In terms of killing innocent civilians, we deplore Al Baghdadi's beheadings of Christians, Westerners, and Muslims who do not fit his model of "right minded" Muslims—but we should not forget to hold Russia responsible for the 17 July 2014 shoot down of Malaysian Airlines Flight MI 17, with 289 souls aboard, including 80 children under the age of 18. Twenty entire families were killed with one shot. Many were from the Netherlands, going to Indonesia on holiday. This is to say nothing of the thousands of Ukrainians who have been displaced, injured, or killed by the fighting there.

But because Putin has dressed his aggression behind the veil of internal Ukrainian political divisions and the ensuing instabilities, and because he seems to behave as one of us, we are loathe to see clearly the threat he represents. We should not ignore the lessons of the 20th century when it comes to appeasing those who continually flaunt respected behaviors between nations. The more we ignore a bully today, the harder it is to push him back tomorrow.

So what should we do?

First and most importantly, the U.S. and our European partners need to rededicate ourselves and our resources to the "vision of a Europe whole and free." This concept has driven NATO and EU reform and expansion since 1989. We must not allow Putin to undermine its core tenants. We need to mass our political will and resources to continue the pursuit of that laudable political goal. Next, we must realize Putin's grander plans and that we need to contain any further expansion while undermining and rolling back his activities in Ukraine. Third, we need to put relentless political pressure on our European allies to focus them on this unacceptable behavior and get their support for taking action to confront then contain Russia. Fourth, we must develop a doctrinal approach involving whole-of-government tools to combat and defeat Maskirovka 2.0.

This approach should employ the traditional elements of national power; diplomatic, informational, military, and economic. But in addition, we should deploy the other elements we have used to great avail in campaigns against terrorists and other clandestine networks. These include intelligence resources, financial controls, and law enforcement assets.

We should study the Maskirovka 2.0 phenomena so we can determine its very initial steps, and use those as components of an early warning system. NATO and the EU need to develop a much better understanding of Russia's steadfast and brazen use of disinformation to keep the pressure on the enemy and divert focus from themselves. That disinformation needs to be

debunked on a moment to moment basis, and broadcast for the world to see. Populations within the Russian broadcast footprint need to be reminded time again that they are being duped by Moscow. Of course this will be easier in those nations that fear Russian adventurism, and less so in areas that believe that Russia has their best interests at heart.

The essence of the campaign would be to unmask the Russian hand and expose their actions to local and world scrutiny. Today Putin and his surrogates have clear information dominance over this space. We would need to reverse that table. Here are some recommendations that should be explored by the U.S. and our European allies and partners.

An Outline of a Campaign to Combat Maskirovka 2.0

First, it is essential that governments and international institutions recognize that Russian malign behavior today has turned a corner, and that a reversal to that trend is unlikely any time soon. We can no longer treat Russia as a member of the family of law- and treaty-abiding nation states. Her behavior has placed her beyond that group. To this end, the recently released U.S. 2015 National Military Strategy calls out Russian behavior in clear terms:

> Some states, however, are attempting to revise key aspects of the international order and are acting in a manner that threatens our national security interests. While Russia has contributed in select security areas, such as counternarcotics and counterterrorism, it also has repeatedly demonstrated that it does not respect the sovereignty of its neighbors and is willing to use force to achieve its goals. Russia's military actions are undermining regional security directly and through proxy forces. These actions violate numerous agreements that Russia has signed in which it committed to act in accordance with international norms, including the AUN Charter, Helsinki Accords, Russia-NATO Founding Act, Budapest Memorandum, and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.[2]

Although somewhat less forceful, the 2015 G-7 Summit Declaration also condemns Russia's actions in Ukraine.

> We reiterate our condemnation of the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation and reaffirm our policy of its non-recognition. We reiterate our full support for the efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine, particularly in the framework of the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. We welcome the OSCE's key role in finding a peaceful

[2] Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy* (Washington, D. C.: Department of Defense, Joint Staff,[2015]), 2.

> solution. We call on all sides to fully implement the Minsk agreements including the Package of Measures for their implementation signed on 12 February 2015 in Minsk, through the established Trilateral Contact Group and the four working groups. We are concerned by the recent increase in fighting along the line of contact; we renew our call to all sides to fully respect and implement the ceasefire and withdraw heavy weapons. We recall that the duration of sanctions should be clearly linked to Russia's complete implementation of the Minsk agreements and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty. They can be rolled back when Russia meets these commitments. However, we also stand ready to take further restrictive measures in order to increase cost on Russia should its actions so require. We expect Russia to stop trans-border support of separatist forces and to use its considerable influence over the separatists to meet their Minsk commitments in full.[3]

A core component of the campaign must be to continue to call out Russian behavior as unacceptable. The U.S., NATO, and the EU should continue to work with allies and partners to heighten awareness among governments, thought leaders, and their publics to clarify malign Russian behaviors and condemn them as destructive to the rule of law and outside the boundaries of appropriate conduct for legitimate nations.

Russia has a well-developed understanding of NATO and EU processes and can be counted on to exploit the individual and collective institutional weaknesses as essential considerations of the Maskirovka 2.0 game plan. We need to take this into consideration as we design the structure of the response campaign. Putin knows that NATO EU asymmetry creates challenges for both institutions, as does the requirement for consensus decision making—particularly at NATO. He has watched (with probable disbelief) as NATO and the EU have struggled for 15 years to agree on modalities to ensure collaboration between the two structures.

The campaign this paper recommends requires a whole-of-government response from an international set of actors. That demands expertise be drawn from both NATO and the EU. The EU must drive the economic, financial, and law enforcement elements of the campaign. The economic actions might include sanctions, economic support, investments, and the like. On the financial portion, the EU and its banking institutions will be key to the "follow the money" implementation. The EU's Justice and Home Affairs structures must drive legal reforms, push for charges against Russian and Ukrainian leadership, field EU Police Missions, and coordinate with host nation legal authorities, Interpol, and the International Criminal Court. NATO should lead the military aspects of the campaign. The crucially important diplomatic, intelligence, and informational elements must draw resources from both institutions.

[3] G7 Leaders, "G7 Summit" (Schloss Elmau, Germany, White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2015), 6.

The U.S. has missions at both institutions. While considered a lead nation (perhaps the lead nation) at NATO, the U.S. is not a member of the EU, and its mission there serves largely as an observer of EU activities and events.

This division of the tools of power between institutions has plagued both as they have sought to confront irregular warfare challenges. Putin understands this and may be banking on a continued stalemate between the two as part of the confusion that permits Maskirovka 2.0 to move forward.

Perhaps the best answer is to form a coalition of the willing based around a NATO-like Quad or Quint format in which the three or four European dual members form the key bridge between the two institutions. In this way the coalition could leverage skills from both, while not requiring consensus from either in order to act.

Or maybe a completely new lead nation group is required? One option might be to create a group of six—four dual members from both organizations (such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Poland), plus Sweden (member of the EU, but not NATO), and the U.S. (member of NATO but not the EU.) Poland's presence would help the new dual members in Eastern Europe buy into the concept, since "one of their own" would have a lead role.

Employing the coalition of the willing format is an intentional ploy to work around the consensus rules that cause so many multilateral institutions to eschew speaking truth to power, because one or two members are not fully on board, or who may have competing agendas that preclude their "calling a spade a spade." Additionally, many multilateral institutions are precluded from action by blockage by a single member state over an issue that is not germane to the subject at hand. If a broad consensus can be developed over time, then many actions can be worked at the multilateral organizational level. But this campaign needs to start soon and show results quickly. Getting bogged down in multilateral inertia is not the way to get this effort off the ground.

Russia acts using all of its tools of national power, and can coordinate them effectively because dissent is no longer tolerated in its decision-making processes.

The coalition would need to develop an international "whole of government approach." I fully recognize that orchestrating a single nation's set of governmental departments and agencies to produce a coherent set of policies (and implementing them) is a tall order. Doing so on an international scale is even more difficult, but is essential to accomplishing this task. Russia acts using all of its tools of national power and can coordinate them effectively because dissent is no longer tolerated in its decision making processes. The West needs to employ all tools to combat this aggression. We must accept that our coordination will not be as efficient as Putin's, but what it lacks in efficiency it will make up for in legitimacy.

For the sake of this paper, let's assume we can get a core group of four, five, or six to establish and run such a collation. The coalition would have several purposes. First, it would share information about Russia and its surrogates' actions and behaviors. Second, it would

highlight the illegal nature of these actions and condemn them in as many international fora as possible. Third, the members of the coalition would put pressure on those institutions of which they are members to encourage more robust responses from multilateral bodies including NATO, the EU, the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, the United Nations, the ICC, and others. Fourth, the coalition would serve as the management structure for the campaign to confront, contain, and curtail Russian malign activities in the near abroad.

The headquarters of the effort should be in Brussels. This would ensure ready access to the missions from all allies and partners for NATO and EU members, as well as NATO and EU headquarters and their political, military, and security offices. Since the U.S. has two missions in Brussels, they could be instructed to create a joint team from both missions to run the U.S. inputs to the coalition. For the military response, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) should lead and coordinate with the EU Military Staff. The Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe could play the key bridging role, as envisaged in numerous NATO-EU agreements. The U.S. should advocate that the NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ) serve as the catalyst to build the SOF components of the coalition. The coalition could use the NSHQ training facility at Chievres to train the military components of the observer teams, perhaps all members of the field observer teams, to standardize the security and force protection training that will be required. Perhaps the NATO SHAPE School at Oberammergau, Germany could be used for other aspects of the training, as well as EU educational structures in Brussels. The U.S. and Germany could also consider doing training at the George C. Marshall Center in Garmisch, Germany, and the U.S. could offer access to the facilities and ranges at Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels.

Additionally, coalition leadership must develop a coalition counter-disinformation working group with dual members, allies and partners mixed, modeled on the one from the Reagan administration to develop, can coordinate and implement the informational campaign.[4]

The coalition should create teams to address each of the core tools of national power; diplomatic, informational, military, and economic. Given the clandestine nature of Russian aggression, it would be useful to have groups focus on the intelligence (and counter-intelligence), law enforcement, and financial aspects of Russian and separatist Ukrainian actions as well. Each of these teams should assess enemy actions in their focus area, but should also be required to develop options for combating each enemy move. Frequent fusion sessions should be conducted to gain a better picture of the totality of malign activities, to look for emerging threats and opportunities, and to explore how to debunk false separatist and Russian claims.

There is much work to be done diplomatically and politically in this campaign. The core task is to convince regional and global actors that Russia is on a dangerous internal and external political trajectory that undermines economic growth and political freedoms in Russia, and that has (and will continue to) decreased security and stability in Europe and Eurasia. Left unchecked, Putin will seek to coerce neighbors not only in the near abroad, but to the south and

[4] Fletcher Schoen and Christopher J. Lamb, *Deception, Disinformation, and Strategic Communications: How One Interagency Group made a Major Difference* (Washington, D. C.: National Defense University Press,2012).

east as well. His reliance on low-visibility and clandestine techniques for the equipping, training, and advising of allegedly independent Russian minority populations and their call to secede creates just enough political confusion to preclude early robust responses to his aggression. The myth of oppressed Russian minorities needs to be debunked from the outset, core work for politicians and diplomats.

Getting on top of the informational dimension of this effort may be the hardest part of the entire concept. Because he controls his media outlets, Putin can construct a tight but entirely false message, and sell it via repetition and denial. The coalition will require a robust, skilled, and flexible effort to confront this informational war. All media platforms will need to be used, traditional tools like word of mouth, radio, and television will play key roles, but the coalition will need to leap forward into the 21st century social media world and employ Facebook, Twitter, and other emerging technologies to reach key audiences. Since the only news that much of eastern Ukraine gets is Russian news, the coalition will need to develop other sources that can override or circumvent Russian jamming and associated countermeasures.

Military tools must play an active role as well. The newly released U.S. National Military Strategy sets the tone for NATO and partners:

> In Europe, we remain steadfast in our commitment to our NATO allies. NATO provides vital collective security guarantees and is strategically important for deterring conflict, particularly in light of recent Russian aggression on its periphery. U.S. Operation ATLANTIC RESOLVE, our European Reassurance Initiative, NATO's Readiness Action Plan, and the many activities, exercises, and investments contained in them serve to underline our dedication to alliance solidarity, unity, and security. We also will continue to support our NATO partners to increase their interoperability with U.S. forces and to provide for their own defense.[5]

A key part of Russia's game plan in the near abroad is to place significant Russian conventional force units near the border of the targeted nation. Their presence is described as a "military exercise," but their purpose is coercion—bullying pure and simple. The U.S. and the coalition should do more in the military arena. The goal should be to deter any further Russian adventurism. This will require demonstrating a serious set of capabilities to allies, partners, and the Russian military. Designing this deterrence campaign should be a top U.S. and NATO priority. As we do so, there must be close coordination with Finland and Sweden to ensure their solidarity with our defense of the Baltics. Our goal should be to preclude "Operation Baltic Fortress 2016," a description of a future NATO Article V defense of Estonia in response to a Russian attack, recently described in the *RUSI Journal* by Richard D. Hooker, director of the Institute for National Security Studies and former dean of the NATO Defense College.[6]

[5] Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, National Military Strategy, 9.
[6] Richard D. Hooker, "Operation Baltic Fortress, 2016," *The RUSI Journal*, 160, no. 3 (July 2015), 26-36.

On the economic front, Putin does not hesitate to play the energy security card by manipulating the supply and/or price of natural gas to Ukraine and other European consumers. The coalition will need to address this head-on by exploring alternative sources of supply, decreasing European dependence on Russian natural gas and other fossil fuels. Sanctions against Putin and key members of his leadership team should be expanded and reinforced. Sanctions should also be placed and enforced on Ukrainian separatist leaders, and on known Russian military advisors in Ukraine. The coalition should design and implement other types of economic support for Kiev to buttress Ukraine's resolve and serve as an example for other states who are being coerced by Russian economic strong arming. It should also explore opportunities to maintain global oil prices at or below current prices. This is perhaps the single greatest economic lever that could be deployed to ensure continued stress across the Russian oligarchy, but eventually on the Russian domestic political landscape as well.

The coalition should also take a page from the last 15 years of our collective counterterrorism lessons learned and develop the skills and tools to "follow the money" in Maskirovka 2.0. Interdicting funds used to support these clandestine political, military, and informational activities is an essential skill set. Creating and employing international banking conventions to cut off electronic funds transfers is a first step. Determining the financial institutions and banks involved and black listing them would force Russia and her surrogates to move to cash transactions. These can be difficult to track, but adapting skills we have developed for cash interdictions in counterinsurgency operations should not be too difficult. Charging Russian and Ukrainian front companies and other money laundering enterprises would also complicate the funding of Russia's hybrid wars.

The coalition should focus intelligence and counterintelligence resources on this threat. Because Maskirovka 2.0 relies on low visibility and employs many clandestine techniques, some of its activities may be difficult to discern, particularly in time to take preventive action. Therefore, intelligence collection and analysis must play key roles. Using a combination of intelligence, counterintelligence, Special Operations Forces, and national law enforcement officers, the coalition should create an all-source collection, fusion, and analysis capability to unmask clandestine activities and develop a set of indications and warnings that describe Maskirovka 2.0 in its incipient stages. This work will serve the coalition well but should also be shared with NATO allies and partners and the EU Military Staff to help them understand the clandestine aspects of Putin's hybrid warfare doctrine.

Finally, we should work with Ukraine and other partners, as well as NATO allies and the EU, to develop legal code that would criminalize Russian and separatist behaviors while not undermining basic freedoms. This is a tall order but essential to stopping and rolling back these campaigns. The threat of law enforcement action can deter some thugs. Given our forensic, communications, and video capabilities today, recording and tracking criminals (much as we have done for makers of improvised explosive devices in Iraq and Afghanistan) can result in arrests and prosecutions long after the fact. Creating forensic databases sets the conditions for eventual success in court.

If Russian soldiers were being tried in Kiev courts, or better yet in Brussels or the Hague, the spotlight would serve to unmask Russian clandestine military and other subversive activities. We need to hold Putin accountable for the actions he is getting away with today by shining light on them and not relenting. Once Russian actions have been exposed, NATO and EU leaders, particularly heads of state and government, need to stand firm to hold Russia accountable and get Putin to back down.

Combating Disinformation

Because disinformation and propaganda are core components of the Russian campaign, this section will provide some additional ideas in that arena. Much of the Russian propaganda content has no base in fact, but with repetition and volume these stories gain traction nonetheless. This was one of the core characteristics of Maskirovka in the Soviet era. Combating this propaganda is a formidable task, but it can be done. During the Reagan administration, the U.S. Government created an interagency group to combat Soviet deception and disinformation. A 2012 INSS Study described the working group, its successes and challenges. The study should be required reading for all members of the coalition of the willing. The study's Executive Summary states:

> This study explains how one part-time interagency committee established in the 1980s to counter Soviet disinformation effectively accomplished its mission. Interagency committees are commonly criticized as ineffective, but the Active Measures Working Group is a notable exception. The group successfully established and executed U.S. policy on responding to Soviet disinformation. It exposed some Soviet covert operations and raised the political cost of others by sensitizing foreign and domestic audiences to how they were being duped. The group's work encouraged allies and made the Soviet Union pay a price for disinformation that reverberated all the way to the top of the Soviet political apparatus. It became the U.S. Government's body of expertise on disinformation and was highly regarded in both Congress and the executive branch. The working group also changed the way the United States and Soviet Union viewed disinformation. With constant prodding from the group, the majority position in the U.S. national security bureaucracy moved from believing that Soviet disinformation was inconsequential to believing it was deleterious to U.S. interests—and on occasion could mean the difference in which side prevailed in closely contested foreign policy issues. The working group pursued a sustained campaign to expose Soviet disinformation and helped convince Mikhail Gorbachev that such operations against the United States were counterproductive.[7]

[7] Schoen and Lamb, *Deception, Disinformation, and Strategic Communications*, 3.

It is time we relearn these two old lessons: Russian disinformation is not inconsequential; it is deleterious to our vision of a "Europe Whole and Free," and it can be countered with a sustained campaign to expose it. The campaign's goals should be to increase the financial and political costs of those operations. Additionally, we must teach this lesson to our partners, many of whom lived through the era of Soviet disinformation and who see today's Russian use of propaganda as a "return to the bad old days."

In addition to countering disinformation, we must not let Russian mistakes in Ukraine go unchallenged. When opportunities present themselves for the West to repeatedly hammer Russia, we should make the most of it. The shoot down of MI 17 is a case in point. The coalition should create a persistent information campaign that keeps the children of Malaysian Airlines Flight MI 17 in the public eye. Interviewing grandparents and other relatives about a different child each week, and placing these interviews on television and in online media repeatedly would keep the focus on this crime. Releasing classified details about the specifics of the shoot down should also be considered, as well as charging responsible Ukrainian and Russian officers known to have been in the chain of command or on site.

Figure 1. A Russian Buk M1-2 air defense missile system is on display in Nizhny Tagil, Russia. A Dutch Safety Board determined a similar Buk system was used to shoot down Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over Ukraine, killing all 298 people aboard. Photo used by permission of Newscom.

Another example to be explored is the recent Russian misstep when information on the payment of death and injury benefits to Russian service members killed or injured in Ukraine was unintentionally released in Russian budget documents. An exploitation cell should be created to investigate and leverage this information, expand on it, confront survivors, portray the payments as insufficient "hush money" for the families who lost loved ones, and the like. The payments should be used as legal proof of the Russian government's hand in the campaign, and those who made them should be charged with underwriting criminal activities.

Once the coalition has been created it should conduct operations in the field, in national capitals, and at the coalition headquarters levels. In U.S. parlance, these might be called the

tactical, operational, and strategic levels of action. Activities would need to be coordinated across all three levels and implemented at all three levels simultaneously.

At the tactical level, observer/monitor teams should be dispatched into eastern Ukraine and other contested zones. Their functions would be to monitor, document, and report all suspected Russian and surrogate separatist activities in near real time. Team composition should include some mix of police, gendarmes, special operators, counterintelligence agents, public affairs and psychological operations capabilities, camera crews, and unmanned aerial vehicles with day and night camera capabilities. Observer teams should be dispatched to hot spots to gather and report on events in real time. Their purpose would be to get first-hand reporting that would be used to debunk the Russian propaganda spin of the same event. It would also be used later for criminal prosecution purposes.

At the operational level, capitals of nations in the coalition should have interagency and international fusion teams who should validate, process, and disseminate the tactical teams' products. These reports should seek to increase transparency of local actions, debunk Russian disinformation about the same events, and constantly undermine the credibility and legitimacy of Russia and her partners. The United States European Command and its interagency coordination group could play this role for the U.S. component of the coalition. Reports should also be routinely disseminated to NATO and EU political and military situation centers and leadership.

At the strategic level, coalition member heads of state and government and their political, military, informational, and economic staffs should work to continuously focus world attention on Russian aggression, deceit, and disinformation. They should also seek to increase membership in the coalition and push this agenda in multilateral fora. Condemnation should be prominent in every NATO, EU, and G-7 communique. The accusations should be substantive and backed with clear evidence of Russian involvement.

Would this campaign be expensive? Of course it would, and of course money is in short supply in the U.S. and across Europe. But the cost of this proactive and preemptive series of measures would be tiny compared to what we would spend in the first 10 days of an Article V response to a Russian attack against one the Baltic States. And if NATO were not able to act in that instance, a U.S.-led military operation based on a coalition of the willing would come at even higher financial costs.

Our inaction continues to embolden Putin. He will not stop until he knows with certainty that the costs to him will outweigh the gains. Undertaking this defensive international whole-of-government campaign to address and reverse his hybrid war adventures is far less expensive than having to mount an eventual military response. It also has a better chance of success. This is a real world case of "a stitch in time could save nine."

The U.S. has a near 100-year legacy of investments in the security and stability of Europe—from the arrival of U.S. doughboys in France in June 1917 to fight in World War I, through the major campaigns of liberation in World War II, the Marshall Plan, the 50 years of the Cold War, and our military and political engagement in the Balkans conflicts. We have consistently supported the building of European institutions including NATO, the EU, and the

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We championed NATO's Partnership for Peace and have steadfastly supported NATO and EU expansion.

Our driving goal across this century-long effort has been the creation (and maintenance) of a family of like-minded nations who agree that responsible self-governance via the rule of law, the protection of economic and political freedoms, and the resolution of disputes through peaceful means are the hallmarks of the modern world. With the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the end of the Cold War the vision of a "Europe Whole and Free" was within reach. In April of 2014 at the Atlantic Council Vice President Biden captured this idea well:

> We're here today – we're here today to celebrate the fruits of two actually audacious and consequential notions – maybe two of the most consequential and audacious notions of the last hundred years: the idea that after centuries of conflict, culminating in two world wars, Europe could reinvent itself in a single community defined by peace, anchored in political and economic integration, collective self-defense, and a free flow of commerce and people; and no less important, the idea that the door to this transatlantic community would remain fundamentally open to free nations who share the values and commitments we have, and to those who dream from inside the captive nations of the day they too might join a Europe whole and free. And today I want to talk about the road traveled to get there and the road ahead to complete this project, because it is not complete in my view.[8]

Putin's actions threaten that vision and undermine our earlier investments of blood and treasure. Now is not the time to turn our backs on this vision or to be distracted by other national security priorities. Our response (or lack thereof) to Putin's aggression will have large impacts on our other national security priorities. If we let him role back fledgling democracies in Georgia, Ukraine, and elsewhere in the near abroad, what does that tell the Chinese about our commitment to these ideals?

If we tell the Third World that responsible, participatory, legitimate governance, coupled with personal, political, economic, and religious freedoms, underpinned by tolerance and diversity are the best way forward, and that these create the framework of our answer to Zawahiri's and Al Baghdadi's visions of the future, then we had better do what is necessary to sustain the gains we have made in Europe.

If we fail to confront this aggression, there is a better than ever chance that Putin and Russia will continue to roll back freedom across Eastern Europe by coercion, intimidation, bullying, and the use of masked force. The continuation of the sanctions agreed to by the G-7 at their Summit at Schloss Elmau in Bavaria this year is a good start. The communique's text on Russia is helpful. "We recall that the duration of sanctions should be clearly linked to Russia's

[8] Joseph Biden, *Closing Remarks by Vice President Biden, Atlantic Council Conference, "Toward a Europe Whole and Free"* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of State, 2014).

complete implementation of the Minsk agreements and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty. They can be rolled back when Russia meets these commitments. However, we also stand ready to take further restrictive measures in order to increase cost on Russia should its actions so require."[9]

This campaign is designed to increase those costs. Much more can and should be done. Russia's Maskirovka 2.0 in Ukraine needs to be stopped. The time was yesterday, but the Russian action in Syria may provide the West a new window of opportunity.

Russia in Syria: More Maskirovka 2.0

In the Syria campaign, we can see many elements of the Maskirovka 2.0 concept, especially in Putin's assertions that his engagement is meant to bring peace and stability to the region and that his strikes are targeting "terrorists." As we watch the unfolding of Russia's concept for the region, Maskirovka 2.0 concepts will continue to become ever more evident.

Of particular note is the political and military ground work that Putin must have done in the region well in advance of his recent overt moves. He must have been working hard behind the scenes in Damascus, Baghdad, and Tehran to be able to announce their cooperation in support of the Assad Regime with such ease. Russian use of long range missiles is particularly worrisome, displaying here-to-fore unused sea-based strike capabilities from very unusual waters—the Caspian Sea. These missiles and their launch trajectories are introducing all manner of new considerations into an increasingly complex set of possible scenarios, transiting the airspace of numerous regional players. Iran, Iraq, and Syria must have known (and approved) in advance of his intent to launch cruise missiles from the Caspian, since none seemed the least bit surprised or angered by the violations of their airspace.

If Putin has been clandestinely working on this project for the last few years, we should consider the possibility that Russia has been coaching Iran during much of the nuclear agreement negotiations, pretending to play a role as a member of the P-Five, all the while helping Iran in its interaction with the other partners, with a particular emphasis on interaction with the U.S.—with whom Russia has long experience on nuclear negotiations. This would be classic Maskirovka 2.0 at the strategic level. He may have also advised them on their recent ballistic missile launch, as an excellent move to flex Iranian regional and technical muscle, without jeopardizing the nuclear deal or the lifting of the sanctions.

Assad's visit to Moscow on 20 October 2015, his first trip out of Syria in many years, would also seem to demonstrate extensive preparation by Moscow. The announcement that Putin and Assad reportedly discussed his eventual stepping down in a peaceful transition fits perfectly into the Maskirovka 2.0 model. A core concept is to tell your enemies what you know they wish to hear, while doing exactly the opposite. We should expect Russia to robustly reinforce support for Assad in the coming months and go after regime opponents with a vengeance. If Maskirovka 2.0 is at play, Assad has no intent of ever stepping down.

[9] G7 Leaders, *G7 Summit*, 6.

The Russian campaign in the Middle East appears to be a blend of masked activities alongside a strategy of more bare-fisted aggression and intervention—a classic set of activities in the "grey zone." Of course, we should expect the Assad Regime to welcome Russia's efforts to put down these "terrorists" in the news cycles to come, and to applaud Putin's strikes against regime opponents. Assad's support of the intervention will lend an aura of political legitimacy to Russian actions and allow Putin to leverage his theme of regional peacekeeper. One should expect a similar announcement of support or thanks coming from Iraq and Iran. Russia will continue to target non-ISIS anti-Assad forces, with only the occasional strike against what might be an ISIS target. This permits him to frustrate U.S. and the anti-ISIS coalition operations while reaping the benefits of his role as counter balance to U.S. presence in the region.

However, there is an excellent chance that this campaign is far broader than just Syria. The intelligence sharing agreement between Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Hezbollah is likely an indicator of a far more ambitious set of regional and strategic goals for Russia that have likely been under construction for months, if not years. What follows is a worrisome interpretation of what Russia's strategic intent for the region could be.

Suppose (for the sake of argument) that the level of cooperation between Russia and the Shi'a Belt (Iran and Hezbollah, Iraq and the Shi'a militias, Syria, and the Shi'a Houthis in Yemen) is far more expansive than we expect at this time—well hidden from view by core Maskirovka 2.0 techniques like careful preparation, deception, denial, and secret diplomacy. Russia may continue to invest in these relationships for the foreseeable future with the following strategic purposes in mind.

Regional maritime access

Russia has ready access to the Syrian port in Tartus. But suppose that part of the deal with Iran includes port access (or more extensive port basing rights) for Russian naval vessels in southern Iranian ports like Bandar Abbas or Char Bahar. Also suppose that Russia has agreed to work with Iran (also an expert at the indirect approach of influence building and power projection) to establish a Houthi (Shi'a) state in Yemen. If that were to occur with Russian help, one should expect similar port call rights for the Russian navy there.

If Moscow seeks to reestablish its role as a global power, an excellent start would be to secure these port access agreements. These would enable long-range naval patrols, regional port calls, and exercise activities with partners, and place Russian military capabilities at or near two of the world's most strategic choke points: the Bab el Mandeb and the Strait of Hormuz. It also permits Russian naval activities far from the Barents, Black, and Mediterranean Seas where the U.S. and NATO routinely keep a more watchful eye.

Containing Jihad

A second benefit to investment in the Shi'a Belt may be a strategy to contain the most virulent of the jihadists, ISIS and it successor movements to the south of the belt. This would serve as a first line of defense for Moscow against fundamentalist Sunni penetration into the Caucasus and the

Central Asian Republics, and by extension into Russia. Putin may have made a strategic calculation that ISIS presents a serious threat to the region for the foreseeable future, and working with the Shi'a to combat that threat is his best investment opportunity.

Burnishing Russia's Strategic Credentials

A third benefit is that these moves will frustrate and undermine U.S. influence and policies in the region, advancing Russia's presence and prestige while denigrating ours. Gaining access and representing Russia as a partner that can be counted on to be there for the long haul can be easily contrasted to (what he will present as) the U.S.'s fickle and unreliable support for our allies. That he seeks to implement Maskirovka 2.0 in multiple theaters, keeping the U.S. off balance and guessing at his intentions, fits the model to a "T."

Syria, which was already considered a top drawer national security "wicked problem," is replete with opportunities for new Russian experiments with Maskirovka 2.0, hybrid warfare, and the blending of hybrid and conventional capabilities. These may remain focused on Syria or could be expanded to create wider regional challenges for the United States and our partners. Designing a tailored hybrid response to Russian Maskirovka 2.0 in the Middle East will be the subject of another paper.

But Russian engagement in Syria may provide an opportunity for NATO and the EU to take a more aggressive and forceful approach to Russian encroachment in Ukraine. I suspect that Russia will have difficulty focusing on both campaigns in parallel, so we should exploit its overreach to regain some ground in Ukraine. Asymmetry can work for both sides.

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